

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST

Project: Adult Movement Behavior and Long-Term Trends in the Population Dynamics of the Central Population of the California Tiger Salamander

Date: October 7, 2010

Nature of Action: Reclamation will provide \$268,596 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program to Professor Howard Bradley Shaffer, Department of Evolution and Ecology, University of California, Davis to (1) document yearly variation in recruitment, terrestrial habitat use, and survivorship of California Tiger Salamanders (CTS); (2) study critical, currently unmeasured survivorship of young salamanders in their first few months of terrestrial life; and (3) study to understand the relationship between the aquatic habitat quality and salamander population biology, providing a key linkage between the aquatic and terrestrial components of population viability and long-term survival. Professor Shaffer holds a Section 10(a)(1)A Endangered Species Act permit allowing the proposed studies.

Exclusion Category: B (2): Research activities, such as nondestructive data collection and analysis, monitoring, modeling, laboratory testing, calibration, and testing of instruments or procedures and non-manipulative field studies.

Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion

1. This action or group of actions will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. No Uncertain__ Yes__

2. This action or group of actions will involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. No Uncertain__ Yes__

3. This action will have significant adverse effects on public health or safety. No Uncertain__ Yes__

4. This action will have an adverse effect on unique geological features such as wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, refuges, floodplains, or prime or unique farmlands. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
5. This action will have highly controversial effects. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
6. This action will have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risk. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
7. This action will establish a precedent for future actions. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
8. This action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant environmental effects. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
9. This action will adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
10. This action will adversely affect a species listed or proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
 On May 10, 2010, Reclamation initiated informal consultation with the Service on the activities for projects in the CVPCP and the HRP for Fiscal Year 2010. The Service replied on August 17, 2010 that the applicant of this study has a Endangered Species Act permit for the study. Adverse affects have been previously permitted and further minimization measures and take authorization are unnecessary. (See attached memo.)
11. This action threatens to violate Federal, state, local, executive or Secretarial orders, or tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___

12. This action will affect Indian Trust Assets. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
13. This action will have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low income or minority populations. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
14. This action will limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___
15. This action will contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. No Uncertain ___ Yes ___

NEPA Action: Categorical Exclusion EA ___ EIS ___

Environmental commitments, explanation, and/or remarks:

The bulk of this project will be conducted at the Jepson Prairie Preserve, Solano County, CA with additional sampling conducted at five pools in the Sunol and Ohlone Wildernesses in eastern Alameda County, and five pools in the Virginia Smith Trust and neighboring properties in eastern Merced County (See attached map.)

Task 1 seeks to extend the ongoing monitoring of adult and subadult CTS at Jepson Prairie for another three years. This will extend the sampling to nine continuous years at two ponds at Jepson, close to the researcher's goal of 11 years (one population turnover) of continuous sampling.

Task 2 explicitly seeks to fill the largest single gap in age-specific survivorship of CTS by constructing 1,300 meters of new drift fencing and monitoring it for three years to learn about the critical first few months of terrestrial life. Both Tasks 1 and 2 also include modeling components to further use the data in a predictive, management-oriented framework.

Task 3 takes an observational and experimental approach to better understand the relationship between food availability, salamander density, and population reproductive output that will allow us to better model the relationship between climate, salamander growth and development, and landscape usage. These results will be particularly critical in light of projected future impacts on CTS landscapes, due to both climate and development, throughout the CVPCP/HRP ecoregion.

Preparer's Name and Title: *Daphne Kleinmiller* Date: *12-28-10*
Environmental Specialist

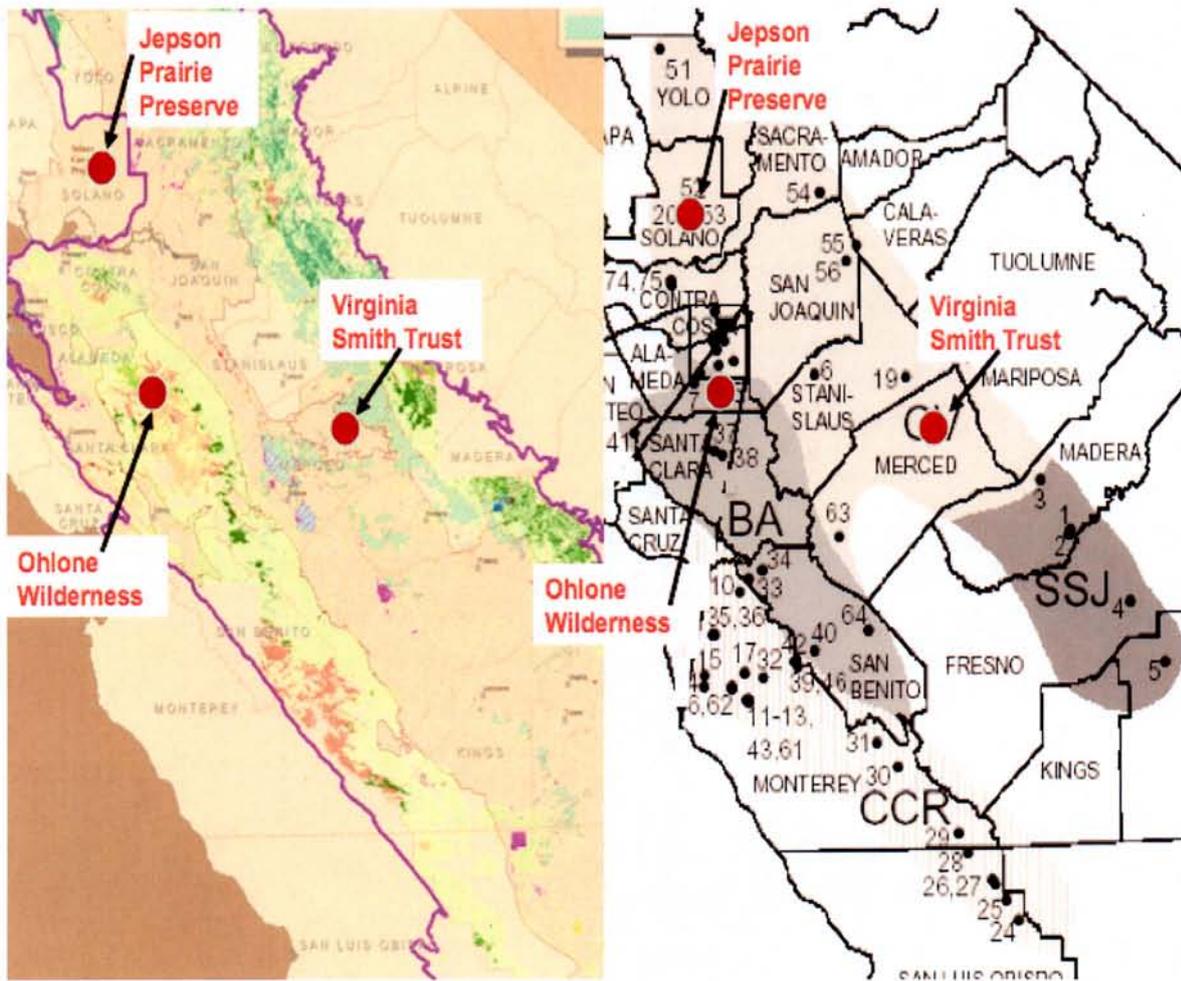
Regional Archeologist concurrence with Item 9: See attached concurrence memo.

ITA Designee concurrence with Item 12: See attached concurrence memo.

Concur: *[Signature]* Date: *12-28-10*
Program Manager, Central Valley
Project Conservation Program

Concur: *[Signature]* Date: *1-3-2011*
Chief, Environmental Compliance
and Conservation Branch

Approved: *[Signature]* Date: *1-4-11*
Regional Environmental Officer





United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

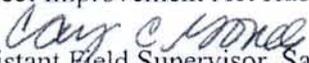


In Reply Refer To:
81420-2010-I-0833-1

AUG 17 2010

Memorandum

To: Manager, Central Valley Project Conservation Program and Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program

From: 
Assistant Field Supervisor, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, Sacramento, California

Subject: Informal Consultation on projects funded through the Central Valley Project Conservation Program and Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program (BOR File Number MP-152 ENV-1.10)

This is in response to the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) May 10, 2010, letter requesting informal consultation and concurrence that the proposed contribution of fiscal year 2010 funds through the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP) and Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program (HRP) to five projects is not likely to adversely affect the threatened and endangered species listed in the project descriptions below. This response is in accordance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*) (Act). It is our understanding the proposed funding actions occur as follows:

1. JCR Ranch Conservation Easement Acquisition: this project will provide funds to the California Rangeland Trust (Rangeland Trust) to assist in the purchase of a 1,409-acre perpetual conservation easement on the 3,959-acre JCR Ranch in Merced County. The 1,409-acre JCR Ranch (East) portion is located about three miles north of the town of Snelling along the east side of County Road J59 (La Grange Road), and 19 miles north of the town of Merced. The latitude is 37° 35' 0.59"N and the longitude is 120° 25' 55.77"W. This working cattle ranch is located in the northeastern corner of Merced County, a region rich in special-status species and their habitat, including vernal pool grasslands. According to the California Department of Fish and Game's Natural Diversity Database, the ranch provides habitat for six Federally endangered species, some of which have been documented to occur on the property or nearby: Conservancy fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta conservatio*), longhorn fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta longiantenna*),

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vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardi*), Hartweg's golden sunburst (*Pseudobahia bahiifolia*), hairy Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia pilosa*), and Greene's tuctoria (*Tuctoria greenei*); and five Federally threatened species: the Central Valley distinct population segment of the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) (CTS), vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), Hoover's spurge (*Chamaesyce hooveri*), Colusa grass (*Neostapfia colusana*), and San Joaquin Valley Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia inaequalis*). The Rangeland Trust will negotiate and purchase a conservation easement with the owners of the JCR Ranch property. The Rangeland Trust will also monitor and ensure compliance of the easement. No changes in existing land-use (moderate grazing) will occur.

2. Coyote Ridge Fee Title Acquisition: The United Technologies Corporation (UTC) property at Coyote Ridge is located on Metcalf Road, southeast of the city of San Jose in Santa Clara County, due east of the small town of Coyote, immediately east of Highway 101. The property is part of an historic Mexican land grant and as such was not surveyed as part of the Public Land Survey System that would provide a legal description. Acquisition of the 1,638-acre property by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will result in the permanent protection of extremely high quality, serpentine soil habitats supporting some of the highest concentrations of rare plants and animals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Federally endangered species documented to be present on the property include the Metcalf Canyon jewel-flower (*Streptanthus albidus* ssp. *albidus*) and Santa Clara Valley dudleya (*Dudleya setchellii*). Federally threatened species documented to occur on the property include the Bay Checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha bayensis*), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), and CTS. Furthermore, the property contains the largest unit of Critical Habitat (unit 13) for the Bay Checkerspot butterfly. Purchase and management of the property by TNC will prevent fragmentation and sale of the property for purposes other than conservation, and will assure that future landowners will continue to manage the property in a way that is beneficial to rare and listed serpentine soil species. TNC will obtain all grant funds with which to purchase the property and facilitate the appraisal, Phase I Environmental Assessment, and other due diligence. No changes in existing land-use (moderate grazing) will occur.
3. Elgorriaga Ranch Peppergrass Flat Fee Title Acquisition: Provide funds to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to purchase in fee title up to 700 acres at Peppergrass Flat in the Ciervo Hills, a low lying range that forms the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley between Panoche Creek and Cantua Creek in western Fresno County. From recent surveys the property is known to be occupied by the endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) and giant kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ingens*). A giant kangaroo rat colony is active on the property. The property also supports potential habitat for the endangered blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*) and San Joaquin woolly-threads (*Monolopia congdonii*). Once the property is acquired, BLM will manage it to benefit sensitive species as part of its approximately 43,000-acre Panoche-Coalinga Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The property will be managed by BLM for a moderate

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level of cattle grazing, with the Elgorriaga Family continuing as lessees.

4. Riparian Restoration on the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge for the Riparian Brush Rabbit: Provide funds to River Partners to restore native riparian refugia for the endangered riparian brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani riparius*) (RBR) at the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge. Restoration activities will include: (1) vegetating 1.8 miles of denuded levees to provide upland refugia and habitat connectivity; (2) vegetating 4.5 acres of high ground with dense thickets of native vegetation; (3) enhancing 25.1 acres of riparian habitat to improve conditions for RBR; and (4) monitoring plant survivorship and song bird populations to measure restoration success. The restoration is specifically designed to benefit RBR, but other federally listed species are expected to benefit including the endangered riparian woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes riparia*) and endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), the threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*), and the western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), a Candidate for Federal listing. Activities will occur on unoccupied areas and will include clearing weeds and debris, out-planting of native plants, installation of an irrigation system, and weed control as plants become established.
5. Adult Movement and Long-Term Trends in the Population Dynamics of the Central Population of CTS: Provide funds to researchers at the University of California, Davis, Department of Evolution and Ecology (UCD) to conduct surveys, monitoring, and field experiments, and develop models for the purposes of determining adult CTS behavior and trends in population dynamics at the Jepson Prairie Preserve and sites in Alameda and Merced Counties. The study contains three main tasks: (1) extend ongoing monitoring of adult and subadult CTS for three years as part of an 11 year continuous sampling of one CTS population cohort, (2) fill an existing data gap regarding the movement behavior of CTS in their first few months of terrestrial life by sampling and recording CTS using drift fences and pitfall traps, and (3) conduct field experiments to better understand the relationship between food availability, CTS density, and reproductive output. Researchers will document and estimate variations in recruitment, terrestrial habitat use, and survivorship that will provide relevant data for resource managers. The study will provide information to assist in the eventual recovery of the species through collaboration between the UCD, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and the U. S. Geological Survey. Specific field techniques will include capture of CTS at the Jepson Prairie Reserve. Following capture individual CTS will be measured, photographed, and released on site.

Based on our review of the information provided by the BOR, the Service concurs that the proposed funding actions for the JCR Ranch Conservation Easement Acquisition, Coyote Ridge Fee Title Acquisition, Elgorriaga Peppergrass Flat Fee Title Acquisition, and Riparian Restoration on the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge for Riparian Brush Rabbit are not likely to adversely affect the threatened and endangered species under the jurisdiction of the

Manager, CVPCP HRP

Service at those sites. The Service believes the proposed funding action for the study, Adult Movement and Long-term Trends in the Population Dynamics of the Central Population of the CTS, will result in adverse effects to CTS in the form of capture and harassment. The proposed BOR funding action would provide financial support to Dr. H. Bradley Shaffer who holds a Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit allowing the following activities throughout the range of CTS: capture; handling; mark and release; relocation; collection eggs and tissue or small individuals for genetic analysis; sacrifice/removal from the wild for voucher specimens; and stomach flushing for a diet study (TE-094642-7). Dr. Shaffer's permit conditions require that an annual work plan be submitted to the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office for approval at least 45 days prior to commencement of research activities. Other measures required as a condition of Dr. Shaffer's permit include:

1. All handling of CTS must adhere to the following measures:
 - i. Handling shall be done in an expedient manner with minimal harm to the individuals being handled. The hands and arms of all workers handling CTS shall be free of lotions, creams, sunscreen, oils, ointment, insect repellent, or any other material that may harm CTS. Handling of CTS shall be done with wet hands.
 - ii. If captured CTS exhibit signs of distress (e.g., lack of response to stimuli or erratic behavior), they shall be immediately released at the point of capture.
 - iii. All captured CTS shall be released at the point of capture unless that location puts them in imminent danger, in which case they shall be placed in a nearby refugium sufficient to protect them.
 - iv. Larval CTS shall not be handled out of the water for longer than 30 seconds unless rewetted, and shall not be retained for longer than 5 minutes for processing.
2. Capture of larval CTS in ponds is achieved via dip-netting with standard aquatic nets, minnow traps, cast nets, seines, and umbrella seines in the following manner:
 - i. Capture of larval CTS in ponds shall be done in a manner to avoid disturbing CTS eggs.
 - ii. The permittee must receive approval from the appropriate Fish and Wildlife Office (FWO) prior to using minnow traps. Minnow traps shall be deployed overnight and checked frequently enough to ensure that larvae are not killed or injured, and do not exhibit signs of physiological stress due to low oxygen levels. The frequency of trap inspections shall be

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- ii. All pitfall traps shall be fitted with a rigid lid that closes securely. When not in use, the lids shall be closed in a manner that precludes entry by CTS and other species. If vandalism occurs, a mechanism for securing the lids in place shall be implemented to assure the pitfall traps are not opened outside of active survey periods.
- iii. Each pitfall trap shall be a cylindrical, non-galvanized metal or plastic container. They shall be at least 8 inches (20 centimeters) deep.
- iv. Each pitfall trap shall contain non-cellulose sponges or other nontoxic absorbent material that shall be kept moist at all times in order to provide a source of moisture for trapped animals.
- v. When open, each pitfall trap shall have a rigid cover supported 1 to 2 inches high to provide access for moving CTS as well as cover from weather. The cover shall be designed so that it prevents predator access.
- vi. When in use, the permittee shall check each pitfall trap as often as necessary and at a minimum of once per day, with one of these checks occurring between 1 hour before sunrise and noon. Whenever possible, traps shall be opened just before dark, and checked and closed the following morning.
- vii. Pitfall traps shall be placed as far as possible from ant nests. If an ant nest develops within 10 feet of an existing pitfall trap, the pitfall trap shall be moved, removed from the field, or closed.
- viii. If not utilized for approved laboratory investigations, captured CTS shall be released as near as possible to the point of capture in a manner that maximizes their survival. CTS shall be released into the mouth of a small mammal burrow or other suitable refugia. CTS shall be watched after release to be sure that they are in a safe location and are not susceptible to increased predation risk.
- ix. If marking of CTS is authorized, only a single toe shall be clipped per individual. Visible alphanumeric tags may be used in lieu of toe clipping. A description of the rationale and methodology for marking individual CTS shall be included in the proposal to conduct research, as required by conditions stated in this permit. Other methods for marking may be used on a case-by-case basis when approved in writing by the appropriate FWO. Information may be submitted electronically if pre-arranged with the Recovery Permit Coordinator.

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- x. The permittee shall carefully lift cover (e.g., logs and other debris) from burrows and other refugia to prevent injury to any CTS and shall replace the cover to its original position.
- xi. Unless within the footprint of the drift fence array, digging or other disturbance to the structural integrity of burrows or other refugia is prohibited unless otherwise authorized in writing from the appropriate FWO. Information may be submitted electronically if pre-arranged with the Recovery Permit Coordinator.
- xii. Activities that would result in small mammals abandoning burrows potentially used as refugia by CTS are prohibited.

5. Collection of tissue from larval CTS must be conducted in the following manner:

- i. No collection of tissue shall occur before first contacting the appropriate FWO for written concurrence to ensure that ponds are not subject to collection more than once.
- ii. Tissue samples may be collected from up to 25 percent of the larval population of a pond provided that the population is greater than 100 individuals or 10 percent of the larval population of a pond if the population is less than 100 individuals.
- iii. When collecting entire larvae (note: collecting whole larvae is not authorized unless approved in writing by the appropriate FWO on a case-by-case basis), they shall first be anesthetized in chlorotone (or a similar product). When larvae cease to respond to external stimuli, they shall be rinsed with water before being placed in ethanol.
- iv. When collecting tail tissue, larval CTS shall be handled in a way to ensure that gills are not damaged.
- v. Tissue collected from each individual larva shall be stored in a solution of 75 percent ethanol in individual vials that are labeled with the date, location of the pond (including GPS coordinates, if possible) from which the larva was collected, and name of the collector. The ratio of tissue to ethanol solution shall be roughly 1 to 10. Be aware that many types of ink are soluble in ethanol.
- vi. Cross-contamination shall be avoided by rinsing scissors and other equipment used in collecting the sample thoroughly with hydrogen peroxide after tissue is collected from each larva. Equipment shall be

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wiped dry or allowed to air dry after being treated with hydrogen peroxide to avoid chemical burns to the next specimen.

6. Information on new localities for CTS shall be reported verbally and followed up in writing to the appropriate FWO and the California Natural Diversity Database within 3 working days of their discovery. Information may be submitted electronically if pre-arranged with the Recovery Permit Coordinator.
7. All federally listed animals that the permittee is not authorized to take, but which may be incidentally captured during the course of conducting authorized fieldwork pursuant to this permit, shall be released immediately at the point of capture. Documentation of such captures shall be recorded and reported in the annual report submitted pursuant to this permit. The following species of other federally-listed animals not authorized in this permit that may be incidentally captured and released during authorized activities in any calendar year is as follows:

Species
California red-legged frog
vernal pool fairy shrimp
vernal pool tadpole shrimp
Conservancy fairy shrimp
Delta green ground beetle
arroyo toad *

The adverse effects (capture and handling) of the proposed BOR funding action were analyzed during Dr. Shaffer's 10(a)(1)(A) permit application process and found to benefit the survival and recovery of the CTS. Therefore, the adverse effects associated with the proposed BOR funding action have previously been permitted and further minimization measures and take authorization are unnecessary.

Unless new information reveals effects of the proposed actions that may affect listed or proposed species in a manner or to an extent not considered, or a new species or critical habitat is designated or proposed that may be affected by the proposed action, no further action pursuant to the Act is necessary.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our response on the proposed BOR CVPCP and HRP funding actions, please contact Josh Hull (Josh_Hull@fws.gov) or Eric Tattersall (Eric_Tattersall@fws.gov) at (916) 414-6600.

Tracking No. 10-MPRO-181

Project: Tiger Salamander Research Project, Alameda, Merced, and Solano Counties, California

Dan:

The proposed project to install drift fences and pit fall traps to study the adult movement behavior and long-term trends in the population dynamics of the California tiger salamander has the potential to affect historic properties. Based on information from efforts to identify historic properties, Reclamation entered into consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on a finding of no historic properties affected as outlined in the 36 CFR Part 800 regulations describing the Section 106 process.

The consultation package was sent to the SHPO on September 7, 2010. On September 30, 2010, SHPO concurred with Reclamation's findings. Reclamation received the SHPO consensus letter on October 5, 2010. Please find a copy of the letter attached for your convenience.

After receiving SHPO concurrence, the Section 106 process has been completed. Please retain a copy of this e-mail and the SHPO letters for your files. Please note that if project plans or actions change, these revisions may require additional Section 106 consideration including consultation with the SHPO.

Sincerely,
Dawn

Dawn Ramsey Ford
Archaeologist
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
2800 Cottage Way, MP-153
Sacramento, CA 95825
916-978-5042
dramsey@usbr.gov

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**



1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053
calshpo@parks.ca.gov
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov

September 30, 2010

In Reply Refer To: BUR100909A

Michael, A. Chotkowski
Regional Environmental Officer
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Regional Office
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825-1898

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION OFFICIAL FILE COPY APPROVED		
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Re: MP-153, ENV-3.00; Tiger Salamander Research Project, Alameda, Merced, and Solano Counties, California (Project #10-MPRO-181)

Dear Mr. Chotkowski:

Thank you for consulting with me regarding the above noted undertaking. Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800 (as amended 8-05-04) regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Bureau of Reclamation (BUR) is the lead Federal agency for this undertaking and is seeking my comments on the effects that the proposed project will have on historic properties. The BUR proposes to provide a grant to the Department of Evolution and Ecology, UC Davis, to study population dynamics of the California tiger salamander.

The undertaking will involve erecting drift fences and pitfall traps in two locations, Olcott Pond and Round Pond. Additionally, observations (with no potential for disturbance of historic properties) will be made in three other locations. The drift fences are constructed of cloth with wood stakes pounded into the ground approximately six inches deep. The pitfall traps will be set approximately six inches deep. Pitfall traps are planned approximately every ten meters. The drift fences will be 900 meters long at Olcott Pond and 400 meters long at Round Pond. The APE is comprised of the two fence locations, totaling approximately two acres. You have submitted in addition to your letter of September 7, 2010, the following document as evidence of your efforts to identify historic properties in the APE:

- *Archaeological Investigation for the California Tiger Salamander Research Project, Alameda, Merced, and Solano Counties* (Dawn Ramsey, Bureau of Reclamation, August 2010)

Identification efforts included a records search and a search of BUR records. The records search identified seven previous studies within a mile of the APE; however none were conducted within or adjacent to the APE. No cultural resources were located within the APE by the records search or a pedestrian survey conducted by BUR archaeologists. Native American consultation has been undertaken by the BUR for this undertaking with a letter sent out July 27, 2010 to the Cortina Band of Indians. NO responses have been received to date.

Classification	ENV 3.00
Project No.	3437
Cons. No.	10073551
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Date Input & Initials	10-5-10 B

The BUR has determined that a finding of No Historic Properties is appropriate. Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), I have no objection to your finding of No Historic Properties Affected.

Be advised that under certain circumstances, such as unanticipated discovery or a change in project description, especially for contamination mitigation if necessary, the BUR may have additional future responsibilities for this undertaking under 36 CFR Part 800. Thank you for seeking my comments and for considering historic properties in planning your project. If you require further information, please contact Trevor Pratt of my staff at phone 916-445-7017 or email tpratt@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Susan K Stratton for

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer